BACKGROUNDER 1-0424 MARCH 24, 1976
ORTIZ/BUENOS AIRES

PROFILE OF THE THREE MILITARY COMMANDERS OF ARGENTINA'S ARMED FORCES

ANNCR: ARGENTINE MILITARY AUTHORITIES HAVE TAKEN PRESIDENT MARIA ESTELA PERON INTO CUSTODY, AND REPORTEDLY HAVE FLOWN HER TO A RESORT IN THE SOUTHWESTERN PROVINCE OF NEUQUEN. A MILITARY COUP IS APPARENTLY TAKING OVER CONTROL OF ARGENTINA -- UNDER DIRECTION OF THE THREE TOP MILITARY COMMANDERS. VOA'S AL ORTIZ FILED THIS REPORT ON
ON THE THREE TOP MEN:

VOICE: THE FIFTY YEAR OLD COMMANDER OF THE ARGENTINE ARMY BELIEVES IN ORDER AND DISCIPLINE, BUT HE SAYS THERE ARE TIMES WHEN A SOLDIER MUST EXERCISE CONSCIENTIOUS OBEDIENCE RATHER THAN BLIND OBEDIENCE. HE SPEAKS FREQUENTLY OF THE PROFESSIONAL ROLE OF THE ARMED FORCES, BUT IN MID-MARCH, HE SAID THE MILITARY WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACT IF ARGENTINA FACED COMPLETE CHAOS. HE HAS REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN OVER CORRUPTION IN THE NATION'S INSTITUTIONS.

WHEN GENERAL JORGE VIDELA WAS NAMED ARMY COMMANDER LAST AUGUST BY PRESIDENT MARIA ESTELA PERON, IT CAME AS A SURPRISE. SHE HAD TRIED TO RETIRE HIM EARLIER AFTER HE REPORTEDLY LAUNCHED AN INVESTIGATION INTO A RIGHT WING TERRORIST GROUP ALLEGEDLY LINKED WITH MISSUS PERON'S SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER JOSE LOPEZ REGA. GENERAL VIDELA HELPED FORCE THE RESIGNATION OF HIS PREDECESSOR GENERAL ALBERTO NUMA LAPLANE, WHO BROKE WITH THE MILITARY'S POLICY OF NON-INTERVENTION IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS LAST YEAR. GENERAL LAPLANE SUPPORTED THE NOMINATION OF A RANKING OFFICER TO A POST IN MISSUS PERON-S CABINET.

GENERAL VIDELA IS DESCRIBED AS A MODERATE WHO HAS MANAGED TO CONTROL THE HARD-LINE ARMY OFFICERS. HE IS MARRIED AND THE FATHER OF SEVEN CHILDREN. AND HE'S POPULAR WITH HIS TROOPS. HE SPENT LAST CHRISTMAS IN THE MOUNTAINS OF NORTHERN ARGENTINA WITH

TROOPS THAT WERE FIGHTING AGAINST LEFT WING GUERRILLAS. GENERAL VIDELA HAS WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE OTHER TWO MILITARY COMMANDERS.

NAVY ADMIRAL EMILIO EDUARDO MASSERA, WHO WAS APPOINTED IN DECEMBER OF NINETEEN SEVENTY-THREE, HAD SERVED LONGER THAN THE OTHER MILITARY COMMANDERS. HE HELPED ENGINEER THE CHANGE FROM MILITARY TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT THREE YEARS AGO AND HAS SINCE MAINTAINED THAT THE MILITARY SHOULD STAY OUT OF POLITICS. HE HAS SERVED ON THE ARGENTINE DELEGATION TO THE INTER-AMERICAN DEFENSE BOARD IN WASHINGTON.

AIR FORCE COMMANDER BRIGADIER ORLANDO AGOSTI RECEIVED HIS APPOINTMENT LAST DECEMBER AT THE HEIGHT OF AN UNSUCCESSFUL REVOLT BY RIGHT WING AIR FORCE OFFICERS WHO WANTED TO OVERTHROW MISSUS PERON. BRIGADIER AGOSTI TOOK PART IN AN ABORTED EFFORT TO OVERTHROW THE LATE PRESIDENT JUAN PERON IN NINETEEN FIFTY-ONE. HOWEVER, HE HAS EXPRESSED HIS AGREEMENT WIT- THE ARMY COMMANDER'S CONCEPT OF A PROFESSIONAL, NON-POLITICAL RMED FORCES.

-0-